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**Commerce & Labor Committee**

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**HB 1392**

**Brief Description:** Exempting federal disaster assistance employees from job search requirements.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Simpson and Chase.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Exempts disaster assistance employees of the Federal Emergency Management Agency from certain work search requirements.

**Hearing Date:** 2/3/05

**Staff:** Jill Reinmuth (786-7134).

**Background:**

Under the Federal Unemployment Tax Act (FUTA) and state unemployment compensation law, individuals who meet certain initial and continuing eligibility requirements may receive unemployment benefits. Initial eligibility requirements include working at least 680 hours in covered employment in the base year, and separating from employment through no fault of one's own or quitting work for good cause. Continuing eligibility requirements include being able and available for work, actively searching for a new job, and not refusing an offer of suitable work.

The Employment Security Department (Department) is responsible for ensuring that individuals register with a job bank to which employers have access. This registration requirement does not apply to individuals with employer attachment or union referral, individuals in commissioner-approved training, and individuals who are the subject of anti-harassment orders.

The Department is also required to monitor the job search efforts of individuals who have received five or more weeks of benefits. These individuals must provide evidence showing at least three different employer contacts per week or at least three documented in-person job search activities at a reemployment center per week. This requirement does not apply to individuals with employer attachment or union referral, individuals in commissioner-approved training, and individuals whose separation from employment was necessary to protect themselves or their families from domestic violence or stalking.

The federal Disaster Relief Act authorizes agencies responding to a disaster to hire temporary personnel. The Federal Emergency Management Agency has nearly 4,000 reservists nationwide, also known as disaster assistance employees, who may be activated and deployed after a disaster.

These employees work intermittently and do not have a specified tour of duty. They are paid on a "when actually employed" basis. There is no payment for sick or annual leave or holidays not worked.

**Summary of Bill:**

Individuals who are separated from employment as disaster assistance employees of the Federal Emergency Management Agency are exempt from certain work search requirements. Such individuals are not required to register with a job bank. Such individuals are also not required to provide evidence of seeking work for each week beyond the fifth week of benefits.

**Rulemaking:** The bill does not contain provisions addressing the rule-making powers of an agency.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.